

(i) The process for developing or revising a plan includes: Assessment, preliminary identification of the need to change the plan based on the assessment, development of a proposed plan, consideration of the environmental effects of the proposal, providing an opportunity to comment on the proposed plan, providing an opportunity to object before the proposal is approved, and, finally, approval of the plan or plan revision. A new plan or plan revision requires preparation of an environmental impact statement.

(ii) The process for amending a plan includes: Preliminary identification of the need to change the plan, development of a proposed amendment, consideration of the environmental effects of the proposal, providing an opportunity to comment on the proposed amendment, providing an opportunity to object before the proposal is approved, and, finally, approval of the plan amendment. The appropriate NEPA documentation for an amendment may be an environmental impact statement, an environmental assessment, or a categorical exclusion, depending upon the scope and scale of the amendment and its likely effects.

(3) *Monitoring.* Monitoring is continuous and provides feedback for the planning cycle by testing relevant assumptions, tracking relevant conditions over time, and measuring management effectiveness (§219.12). The monitoring program includes plan-level and broader-scale monitoring. The plan-level monitoring program is informed by the assessment phase; developed during plan development, plan amendment, or plan revision; and implemented after plan decision. The regional forester develops broader-scale monitoring strategies. Biennial monitoring evaluation reports document whether a change to the plan or change to the monitoring program is warranted based on new information, whether a new assessment may be needed, or whether there is no need for change at that time.

(b) *Interdisciplinary team(s).* The responsible official shall establish an interdisciplinary team or teams to prepare assessments; new plans, plan amendments, and plan revisions; and plan monitoring programs.

§219.6 Assessment.

The responsible official has the discretion to determine the scope, scale, and timing of an assessment described in §219.5(a)(1), subject to the requirements of this section.

(a) *Process for plan development or revision assessments.* An assessment must be completed for the development of a new plan or for a plan revision. The responsible official shall:

(1) Identify and consider relevant existing information in governmental or non-governmental assessments, plans, monitoring reports, studies, and other sources of relevant information. Such sources of information may include State forest assessments and strategies, the Resources Planning Act assessment, ecoregional assessments, non-governmental reports, State comprehensive outdoor recreation plans, community wildfire protection plans, public transportation plans, State wildlife data and action plans, and relevant Agency or interagency reports, resource plans or assessments. Relevant private information, including relevant land management plans and local knowledge, will be considered if publicly available or voluntarily provided.

(2) Coordinate with or provide opportunities for the regional forester, agency staff from State and Private Forestry and Research and Development, federally recognized Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations, other governmental and non-governmental parties, and the public to provide existing information for the assessment.

(3) Document the assessment in a report available to the public. The report should document information needs relevant to the topics of paragraph (b) of this section. Document in the report how the best available scientific information was used to inform the assessment (§219.3). Include the report in the planning record (§219.14).

(b) *Content of the assessment for plan development or revision.* In the assessment for plan development or revision, the responsible official shall identify and evaluate existing information relevant to the plan area for the following:

(1) Terrestrial ecosystems, aquatic ecosystems, and watersheds;

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(2) Air, soil, and water resources and quality;

(3) System drivers, including dominant ecological processes, disturbance regimes, and stressors, such as natural succession, wildland fire, invasive species, and climate change; and the ability of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems on the plan area to adapt to change;

(4) Baseline assessment of carbon stocks;

(5) Threatened, endangered, proposed and candidate species, and potential species of conservation concern present in the plan area;

(6) Social, cultural, and economic conditions;

(7) Benefits people obtain from the NFS planning area (ecosystem services);

(8) Multiple uses and their contributions to local, regional, and national economies;

(9) Recreation settings, opportunities and access, and scenic character;

(10) Renewable and nonrenewable energy and mineral resources;

(11) Infrastructure, such as recreational facilities and transportation and utility corridors;

(12) Areas of tribal importance;

(13) Cultural and historic resources and uses;

(14) Land status and ownership, use, and access patterns; and

(15) Existing designated areas located in the plan area including wilderness and wild and scenic rivers and potential need and opportunity for additional designated areas.

(c) *Plan amendment assessments.* Where the responsible official determines that a new assessment is needed to inform an amendment, the responsible official has the discretion to determine the scope, scale, process, and content for the assessment depending on the topic or topics to be addressed.

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§219.7 New plan development or plan revision.

(a) *Plan revisions.* A plan revision creates a new plan for the entire plan area, whether the plan revision differs from the prior plan to a small or large extent. A plan must be revised at least

every 15 years. But, the responsible official has the discretion to determine at any time that conditions on a plan area have changed significantly such that a plan must be revised (16 U.S.C. 1604(f)(5)).

(b) *New plan development.* New plan development is required for new NFS units. The process for developing a new plan is the same as the process for plan revision.

(c) *Process for plan development or revision.* (1) The process for developing or revising a plan includes: Public notification and participation (§§219.4 and 219.16), assessment (§§219.5 and 219.6), developing a proposed plan, considering the environmental effects of the proposal, providing an opportunity to comment on the proposed plan, providing an opportunity to object before the proposal is approved (subpart B), and, finally, approving the plan or plan revision. A new plan or plan revision requires preparation of an environmental impact statement.

(2) In developing a proposed new plan or proposed plan revision, the responsible official shall:

(i) Review relevant information from the assessment and monitoring to identify a preliminary need to change the existing plan and to inform the development of plan components and other plan content.

(ii) Consider the goals and objectives of the Forest Service strategic plan (§219.2(a)).

(iii) Identify the presence and consider the importance of various physical, biological, social, cultural, and historic resources on the plan area (§219.6), with respect to the requirements for plan components of §§219.8 through 219.11.

(iv) Consider conditions, trends, and stressors (§219.6), with respect to the requirements for plan components of §§219.8 through 219.11.

(v) Identify and evaluate lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System and determine whether to recommend any such lands for wilderness designation.

(vi) Identify the eligibility of rivers for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, unless a systematic inventory has been previously